

How to enhance the competitiveness of ITF Taekwon-Do in Hong Kong

Fourth Dan Essay

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Introduction

I was born in Hong Kong and have lived in Hong Kong over 30 years. I think Hong Kong is one of the world's most important financial centres and commercial ports. It is home to many leisure and cultural activities; it is a shoppers' haven, offering everything from street markets to chic boutiques, and its iconic skyline puts it up there with New York City.

In my opinion, the lifestyle in Hong Kong is fast paced and it means many people may not have time to do sport. However, I strongly believe people should do some martial arts for better health and self-defence.

There are many different martial arts in Hong Kong: Karate, Wing Chun, Jeet Kune Do, Judo, Kendo etc. Most of these are suitable for children and adults, but in Hong Kong, most parents would like their children to learn different martial arts/music lesson/courses, because the portfolio of their child will expand, and it is one of the requirements for the children to attend their preferred school.

The male to female ratio for joining the Martial Arts is around 80:20 per 100 people in Hong Kong. Males are more like to play martial arts because it requires more movement/action that males generally favour more than females, as per my personal opinion.

About the distribution area for martial arts, most clubs / organizations will prefer to choose New Territories in Hong Kong rather than Kowloon / Hong Kong Island because the properties are more spacious, and rent is generally cheaper in the New Territories.

Development for the different martial arts is different. For example, Jeet Kune Do and Kendo have had more people leaving the sport due to a lack of marketing and a lack of presence in mainstream media. For Wing Chun and Judo, most people will know more about them because there has been a specific movie which talks about Wing Chun and the actors come from Hong Kong and China - it means the sport reaches a wider and larger audience. For Kendo, which is a competition item in the Summer Olympics, an athlete from Hong Kong won a medal and therefore increased people's awareness of the sport.

For me, I have been a practitioner of TaeKwon-Do for over 20 years. I thoroughly enjoy it and what I learnt from TaeKwon-Do are not only patterns, sparring and basic techniques; also included are the attitude and the spirit of martial arts, which are deeply inspiring to me.

As I am pending to be promoted to 4th Dan, herewith I would like to write an essay to share about my point of view of how to enhance the competitiveness of ITF TaeKwon-Do in Hong Kong. Below are 3 points that my essay will be mainly focused on: they are Marketing Promotion, Connection of difference clubs and Ways to Increase stickiness.

First Suggestion - Marketing Promotion

Marketing promotion can be divided into 2 parts, online and offline.

Online:

Social Media

We can upload some information related to ITF Taekwon-Do (e.g. The Spirit of TaeKwon-Do, videos of patterns, videos of sparring etc.) to social media. There are different types of social media:

- **Social networking sites.**
Most of us are familiar with social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. They provide an avenue for the sport to reach a wide and diverse range of audiences via WOM (Word of Mouth) marketing and highly targeted marketing via the social networking sites' mature marketing algorithms (see paid ads section below).
- **Image sharing sites.**
Visual content like images, infographics, and illustrations capture our hearts, eyes and imaginations. Social media platforms like Instagram, Imgur, and Snapchat are designed to amplify the power of image sharing. (Or these days, video sharing.) By creating, curating, and sharing your own content, you can inspire and engage users' bonding over a shared interest.
- **Video hosting sites.**
Video hosting platforms like YouTube and Vimeo help creators put together content and share it to a platform optimized for streaming. This accessibility makes video a super important medium.
- **Community blogs.**
Shared blogging platforms like Medium and Tumblr give people a space to express their thoughts and help connect them with readers. These community blog sites provide an audience while allowing plenty of room for customization and self-expression.
- **Discussion sites.**
Anyone is free to ask a question or make a statement, and this attracts people with shared interests and curiosities. However, unlike Facebook and Instagram, users tend to give out less identifiable information. Anonymity is powerful when it comes to people opening up and getting real.

Paid Ads

Paid advertising is an online advertising model where advertisers bid to participate in real-time auctions in order to show their ads within slots on a specific platform or network.

For example, Google Responsive Ads automatically adjust in size, appearance and format to fit any available ad space on the Google Display Network. Google then applies machine learning to serve only the ads that perform the best for you.

Benefits of paid advertising

- Ads are very affordable and measurable
- Ads can be created in mere minutes and there are many tools that help you to

- create the necessary images at very little or no cost at all.
- Specific and granular targeting is available
Paid ad targeting can be very specific and allows you to reach relevant visitors who are interested in your topic related to Taekwon-Do.
- Test and gain valuable audience insights
The paid ads are far quicker than the process of organic social and organic search optimization.

SEO

SEO is [Search Engine Optimization] which can optimize your website to make search engines rank your website higher and give your website more search results. When your website has an article or some wording such as, "ITF TaeKwon-Do is favourite Martial Arts in Hong Kong", you hope that when someone search for keywords related to "favourite martial arts" in Google search engine, your website can be displayed in the first few pages thus make people more likely to click and enter your site.

You can also set the keyword with the name of pattern (i.e., Choong Moo) and let people find and watch the video more easily, which may increase the likelihood that someone may like the video. Self-Defence is also a good choice to be set as a keyword. It will be easy for people to visit your website and view the information you shared related to ITF TaeKwon-Do. Therefore, they will learn more about ITF TaeKwon-Do.

Offline:

Leaflets

A leaflet, unlike paid ads, are visually pleasing and can come in a range of styles that can grab the potential readers' attention. Leaflets can also come in a range of shapes and sizes. This flexibility can influence the layout of your content and create a leaflet that is easy to read and to the point.

Leaflets are cheaper to produce than investing in a digital marketing strategy. It can easily be designed for free on a computer and alternatively, for higher quality leaflets, using digital or offset printing to print the leaflets can also be cost effective options.

Joint Discount

People can join our ITF TaeKwon-Do class with a 50% discount during off-peak hours (i.e., between 4:00pm to 6:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday) to attract people to join. We can also create a promotion like Half price for 2 people or Parent-child discount. Some families or people may not be able to afford the class fee although they are interested in ITF TaeKwon-Do - we should try our best to help them. Only few people may join our club at the beginning, but they may introduce their friends and suggest them to join; this may allow our club to increase its members.

Technical Demonstrations

Technical demos must be interactive -- this keeps people engaged in your presentation and gives them a better understanding of ITF TaeKwon-Do. You can present a team pattern or a demo of short sparring, self-defence in a shopping mall, school hall or community hall.

Second Suggestion – Connection for different club

Before connecting to another club, you should manage yourself and your own club well.

The most important person is you, the instructor!

You are the greatest advertisement for your club; how you conduct yourself, your skill level, your appearance, how you train your students to conduct themselves, and how you speak to your members and their families reflect who you are and what you and your club represents.

So, you can start your advertising campaign for growing your club by looking at yourself. How do you talk to parents, do you greet everyone personally or wait for them to come to you, and then wonder why some do and some don't.

Next step, you can connect to different clubs by joining the referee course, instructor course or competition. All of that can help you to know more people who are joining ITF TaeKwon-Do and you can communicate with each other to get more information about ITF TaeKwon-Do from different club (Network Marketing).

After several communication, you can hold an academic exchange with a different club. The advantage of holding an academic exchange is that all the techniques for the different clubs can be standardized, instructor in different club can share their experience and knowledge in teaching ITF TaeKwon-Do.

If more clubs are connected, more activities can be held. "More people can do many things" this sentence is always correct. If we increase the number of competitions held, times for the player to invite friends to watch will be increased also. We can also hold some performance of power breaking or pattern in places like shopping malls and open spaces in public parks. These things can also draw people's attention and educate them on a different part of ITF TaeKwon-Do.

Third Suggestion – Ways to Increase stickiness

Competition

The process of preparing for the competition, all the way to competing (and hopefully winning a medal in the competition) maybe a long and arduous one. This in itself is a great way to increase stickiness via participation in the training sessions and the satisfaction from competing. Competitions also allow students to set and achieve their goals. The motivation to compete and desire to win a medal will add to the stickiness of the sport.

Events

Holding different events will help the public to learn and understand TaeKwon-Do better, which will help increase competitiveness.

Certificate

Obtaining the certificate can show the efforts of the participants, and the recognition of the certificate also brings them full affirmation and enriches their portfolio. They will therefore be motivated to participate more in the sport.

Conclusion

What we can do first is maintain and manage our own club well. We should try our best to be a good instructor, take care and engage interactively with our current students with good communication. These should be done in collaboration with different clubs also.

I've been practising TaeKwon-Do for over 20 years, and I have loved every minute of it. Wearing a black belt does not mean I am invincible; it merely means that I never gave up and worked past the pain. Being any belt, especially a black belt, requires leadership, patience and both mental and physical strength.

I hope ITF TaeKwon-Do can expand in Hong Kong and become the Top of Martial Arts in Hong Kong.

I constantly remind myself of why I am doing this. It's because I do not want to be a nobody. A black belt is a white belt who never quit. I am immensely proud to be a black belt. Today I am on my way to earning my 4th Dan black belt and hopefully be more than that.